

SAMNET: ACADEMICS ON A JOURNEY

Manjula D. Sharma^a, Will Rifkin^a, Elizabeth Johnson^b, Cristina Varsavsky^c, Stephanie Beames^d, Simon Pyke^e, Andrea Crampton^f, Marjan Zadnik^g, Kelly Matthews^h, Sue Jonesⁱ

Presenting Author: Manjula Sharma (m.sharma@physics.usyd.edu.au)

^aSchool of Physics, University of Sydney, Camperdown NSW 2006, Australia

^bFaculty of Science Technology and Engineering, La Trobe University, Bundoora VIC 3086, Australia

^cFaculty of Science, Monash University, Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

^dFaculty of Science, University of Technology, Sydney, Ultimo NSW 2007, Australia

^eFaculty of Sciences, University of Adelaide, Adelaide SA 5005, Australia

^fFaculty of Science, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650, Australia

^gDepartment of Imaging and Applied Physics, Curtin University, Bentley WA 6845, Australia

^hTeaching and Educational Development Institute, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia

ⁱSchool of Zoology and Tasmanian Institute for Learning and Teaching, University of Tasmania, Hobart TAS 7001, Australia

KEYWORDS: leadership, scholarship of teaching and learning

ABSTRACT

The Science and Mathematics network of Australian university educators (SaMnet), funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, has a Steering Committee of 10 academics attempting to mentor and develop leadership capability amongst some 100 colleagues (SaMnet Scholars) involved in 25 action-learning projects across 16 universities. Initially, SaMnet utilised organisational change strategies and the notion of individual innovations becoming fodder for widespread conversations, gaining momentum and driving a movement to pursue its objectives.

The focus was on how to interact with stakeholders, manage upwards and gain influence. This was coupled with an examination of the role of scholarly work in gaining recognition, while supporting a reflection on practices and achievements. Over the duration of the two-year project, the 25 SaMnet project teams and the SaMnet Scholars have charted various pathways. Nine of the teams have documented their project work in an upcoming *Special Issue of the International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education* whilst others have progressed significantly in their project work with conference papers and institutional presentations. The journeys, in terms of understanding and implementing leadership strategies, have also followed a variety of pathways. Several teams faced unexpected challenges inhibiting progress while others experienced surprising opportunities extending their capacity to influence and effect change. Reflecting on the numerous pathways and subsequent destinations of the SaMnet Scholars, the Steering Committee has come to the view that the 'distributed leadership' model is the appropriate framework for explaining the journey of the SaMnet Scholars as well as the progress of the action-learning projects. However, strategies from organisation change theories have been instrumental in this journey to a distributed leadership model. This paper will capture the story of SaMnet and put forward ways of sustaining the network beyond the life of the funded project.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, Australian National University, Sept 19th to Sept 21st, 2013, page 64, ISBN Number 978-0-9871834-2-2.